

Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children

A DAILY GUIDE FOR 2- TO 6-YEAR-OLDS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CENTER FOR NUTRITION POLICY AND PROMOTION

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Encouraging Food Choices for a Healthy Diet

BE PATIENT. Young children may not be interested in trying new foods. Offer a new food more than once. Show your child how the rest of the family enjoys it. The food may be accepted when it becomes more familiar to your child.

BE A PLANNER. Most young children need a snack or two in addition to three regular daily meals.

- ☞ Offer foods from three or more of the five major food groups for breakfast and lunch.
- ☞ Offer foods from four or more of the five major food groups for the “main meal.”
- ☞ Plan snacks so they are not served too close to mealtime, and offer foods from two or more of the five major food groups.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL. What you do can mean more than what you say. Your child learns from you about how and what to eat.

- ☞ Eat meals with your children whenever possible.
- ☞ Try new foods and new ways of preparing them with your children. Both you and your children can be healthier by eating more dark-green leafy vegetables, deep-yellow vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products.
- ☞ Walk, run, and play with your children, don’t just sit on the sidelines. A family that is physically active together has lots of fun!

BE ADVENTUROUS. At the store ask your young child to choose a new vegetable or fruit, from two or three choices, for a weekly “family try-a-new-food” night. At home your child can help you wash and prepare the food.

BE CREATIVE. Encourage your child to invent a new snack or sandwich from three or four healthful ingredients you provide. Try a new bread or whole grain cracker. Talk about what food groups the new snack includes and why it tastes good. Is the snack smooth, crunchy, sweet, juicy, chewy, or colorful?



When children are offered a balanced diet over time, they will develop good eating habits.

